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## THE FIELD OF MODERN SOCIOLOGY

Now that we have lost within a brief period so many of the great explorers of society—Spencer, Schäffle, Tarde, and Ratzenhofer—the present seems a peculiarly opportune time to pause and, as it were, take stock of the condition of sociology. Only two of the *Anakim*—Gumpłowicz and Ward—are left, and it is clear that more and more the tillage of the field must be committed to the joint efforts of a numerous second generation of workers that shall avail itself to the utmost of the surveys made by the great pioneering minds.

To the task of reviewing and valuing what has so far been accomplished Professor Small brings unusual qualifications. He has no system of his own to project, and therefore does not assail the work of other men with a devastating criticism. A long experience in teaching, editing, and reviewing sociology has brought him into frequent contact with every point of view, so that his book breathes that urbane catholicity which has characterized the conduct of the *American Journal of Sociology*. Furthermore, he rests under no illusions as to the still precarious standing of sociology and the serious interval that continues to divide it from the confidence of the representatives of the older sciences. He is therefore proof against the temptation to set a too sanguine and enthusiastic appraisal upon the systems he examines.

The book falls into nine parts. After an introductory part dealing at length with the definition, impulse, history, and problems of sociology, the author takes up Spencer's system under the caption, "Society Considered as a Whole Composed of Definitely Arranged Parts (Structure)." He accepts Spencer's sociology so far as it goes, but points out that the English philosopher centered his attention on products rather than on the processes out of which they arise. Strange to say, it is precisely in dealing with the *becoming* of institutions that the great apostle of evolution falls short. The eagerness to classify and label human institutions without duly considering the forces that engender and maintain them is happily characterized by Professor Small as "the herbarium method."

After an interpretation of Schäffle's system, equally just and discriminating, the author sets forth the sociology of Ratzenhofer under the captions, "Society Considered as a Process of Adjustment by Conflict between Associated Individuals," "Society Considered as a Process of Adjustment by Co-operation between Associated Individuals." Professor Small finds

<sup>1</sup> *General Sociology: An Exposition of the Main Development in Sociological Theory from Spencer to Ratzenhofer*. By Albion W. Small. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1905. xiii + 739 pages. \$4.

satisfaction in the Austrian thinker's system, and his two hundred odd pages are mostly given up to sympathetic interpretation. This is the first adequate presentment of the system in English, and for his labor of love Professor Small deserves the thanks of all students of society. The kernel of the volume is, in fact, the section dealing with Ratzenhofer, and one pressed for time might well center his attention upon it alone.

Part VI discusses, with perhaps unnecessary fulness, the various concepts derived by analysis of the social process. Part VII considers the psychical problems; Part VIII, the ethical problems; and the last part, the technical problems, presented by the social process. Of these, Part VIII is the most valuable. It is a convincing demonstration that moral problems have their roots deep down in the life of society; that the social process, just because it is an ongoing, must continually call in question and invalidate moral standards it precipitated in some earlier phase; and that no lasting solution of a moral problem can be got by looking within the heart and ignoring the social situation we confront.

The big word of Professor Small's book is "process," and hence there is no better antidote for the brain rheumatism that creeps upon us near the close of our thirties and makes us pass the rest of our days in battling for positions taken up in youth. The "process" idea is a great dissolvent of transmitted thought. It presents everything in flux, shows the relativity of our most cherished mental furniture, our moral standards, social theories, political philosophies, and party programs. It is a thaw-wind clearing away the ice-gorges of dogma that clog the current of the intellect. It teaches us to impeach yesterday's thought, not as in itself unsound, but as unfit for today's occasions. It pictures society as the theater of incessant change which relentlessly antiquates, not only our fathers' wisdom, but even the conclusions of our youth. This is why one rises from Professor Small's book with the feeling that it is still forenoon and not too late to think. He is silent and neutral on all practical or burning questions; he does not assail particular doctrines; yet his demonstration that all our thinking that has practical value refers to a social situation and that the social situation is ever being transformed by the changing play of men's interests, cannot fail to leave a dent on the most indurated dogmatist. The book may be recommended to all who are not afraid to trust their today's thinking as against their yesterday's thought.

EDWARD ALSWORTH ROSS.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA.